



## Exeter City Council

### How decisions are made

### Your Council – A guide to its councillors and committees

Contact: [democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@exeter.gov.uk)

	Pages
1 Exeter City Council's Committees and how they work	3 - 6
2 How to find out what's on an agenda	7 - 8
3 What happens at meetings	9 - 10
4 Portfolio Holders	11 - 12
5 Your rights to attend meetings	13 - 14
6 How you can ask a question at a Council or Committee meeting	15 - 16
7 Your chance to speak at the Planning Committee	17 - 18
8 Planning Committee - Debate and Decision Process	19 - 20

This page is intentionally left blank



## Exeter City Council

### Exeter City Council's Committees and how they work

The Council is comprised of 39 Councillors (Members) who serve for four years. One-third of these Councillors' terms of office expire in each of three years out of four. Details of the political composition and Councillors can be found on the [City Council Website](#).

Councillors have been elected to represent and take decisions on behalf of residents on a range of important issues affecting the everyday life of the City. This includes how to provide homes and car parks; sports, art and leisure facilities; how to care for Exeter's environment and ensure the Council has enough funds to provide essential services. Councillors (also known as Members) meet to set priorities for the present and plan for the future.

A copy of the Council's decision-making arrangements can be found in this document.

#### Full Council

Council meets approximately once every six weeks at the Historic Guildhall in the High Street or the Royal Albert Memorial Museum to decide the Council's overall policies, strategies and to set the budget. The Council appoints the Lord Mayor who presides over Council meetings and appoints Councillors to sit on the various committees.

#### Executive

Exeter City Council operates a Leader and Cabinet Governance model. The Cabinet is known as the Executive, with the Council Leader (appointed by Full Council) and up to 9 other Councillors known as Portfolio Holders, who are responsible for particular areas aligning with the Council's key priorities and Corporate Plan. The Executive is responsible for the most significant and day-to-day decisions which are not delegated to officers.

#### Scrutiny Committees

Exeter City Council has two Scrutiny Committees:

- Strategic Scrutiny Committee; and
- Customer Focus Scrutiny Committee.

Their terms of reference can be found [here](#) by clicking on the appropriate Scrutiny Committee.

#### Regulatory Committees

The Council has three regulatory committees: Planning, Audit and Governance and Licensing Committees.

Their terms of reference can be found [here](#) by clicking on the appropriate Committee.

#### Public Speaking

All Council and committee meetings are open to the public to listen to proceedings. On some occasions, where confidential information is to be discussed, the press and public will not be able to stay for the whole meeting. When this type of information is about to be discussed, the Chair will ask members of the public and press to leave the meeting. The business that is dealt with in public is usually taken at the start of the meeting to make it easier for you to know when to attend.

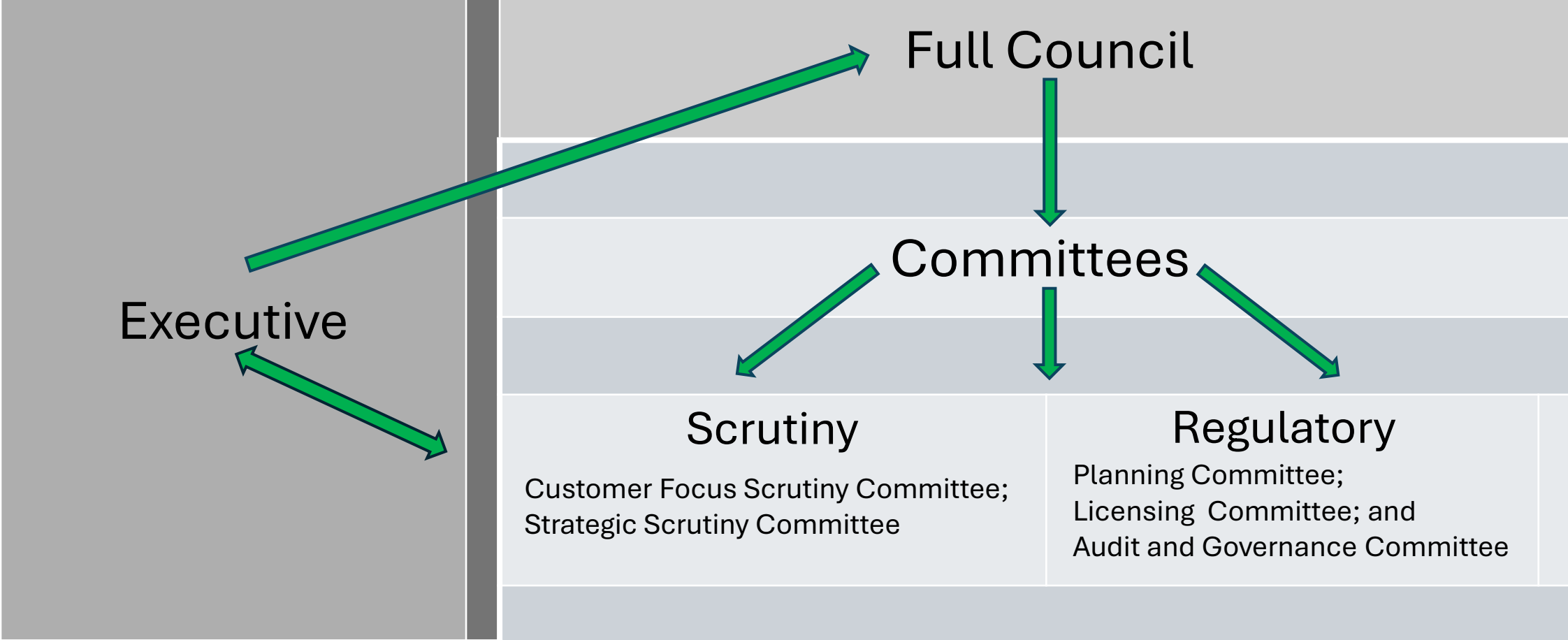
Members of the public may also ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council, the Executive and Scrutiny Committees. Please see [Public speaking at meetings](#).

The public may also speak either for or against planning applications at Planning Committee. Please see [Public speaking at Planning meetings](#).

### **Citizens' rights**

Citizens' rights can be found in the Constitution under Article 3 – [Citizens and the Council](#).

# Exeter City Council's decision-making arrangements



This page is intentionally left blank



**Exeter City Council**

## The Council's Committee Structure

### What is an agenda and where can I see a copy?

An agenda is a list and order of things that will happen during the meeting. Each item on the agenda will usually have a report from officers which will contain recommendations.

The agenda for meetings of Council, the Executive, Scrutiny and other Committees are available for inspection by members of the public at least five days before the date of the meeting. Agenda for meetings can be viewed on the Council's [website](#)

### How can I find out what meetings are taking place?

Every month the Council produces a list of forthcoming meetings. These are displayed outside the Guildhall – the list gives full details of the date, time and venue for each meeting. An interactive [calendar](#) can also be found on the website.

### What time do meetings start?

Executive and other Committees generally start at 5.30pm. Meetings are usually held in the Civic Centre on Paris Street.

Full Council meetings are currently held at Exeter Guildhall at 6pm. Meetings may also be held at the RAMM or other suitable location.

This page is intentionally left blank



## Exeter City Council

### What happens at meetings

#### Are Committee meetings open to the public?

All Committee meetings are open to the public and there will be a number of agenda and reports available for the public at each meeting with a copy available in the reception of the Civic Centre from the time of publication. At the top of the agenda you will find the name and telephone number of the person who is responsible for coordinating the arrangements for the meeting, within the Democratic Services Team, who will be pleased to help with any queries before or after the meeting.

#### Who attends meetings?

All [committee members](#) will have a nameplate on the table in front of them so you can identify them. There will also be other people at the table – these will be officers of the Council who are there to advise committee Members or answer questions – they do not take part in the decision-making process.

The Chair is responsible for the orderly conduct of the meeting, supported by the Deputy Chair.

#### What happens at meetings?

First, the committee is asked to make sure the minutes of the previous meeting are correct. If councillors agree they are correct, they are signed by the Chair as the official record of that meeting.

The committee will usually debate the information in a report attached to the agenda for each item and will make a decision by taking a vote. Sometimes there is no debate on a matter before the vote is taken. This doesn't mean that the report hasn't received careful consideration; it means that no-one wants to question the recommendations.

A member of a committee should declare an interest as defined in the Members Code of Conduct under Part 5c of the [Constitution](#), before an item is debated.

#### What happens after the meeting?

Following the meeting, the Democratic Services Officer will prepare the minutes, and officers will act on the decisions taken.

Decisions made at Executive will normally come into force five working days after publication on the website of the Statement of Decisions (which are normally published within two working days of the meeting) unless called in by a Scrutiny Committee. Where the matter in question is urgent, the decision will come into force immediately. You can also search for and view recent committee [agenda, reports and minutes](#) on the website.

This page is intentionally left blank



**Exeter City Council**

## Executive Members and Portfolios

A list of Executive Members and Portfolio Holders can be found under Part 3b in the Constitution.

Executive Portfolio Holders are Councillors appointed to take responsibility for specific areas of the council's work and are part of the council's executive decision-making body (often called the Cabinet or Executive).

The **Council Leader** selects a small group of councillors (up to 9 Members) to form the Cabinet/Executive which is agreed at the Annual Council Meeting.

The current Executive Members can be found [here](#).

This page is intentionally left blank



**Exeter City Council**

## Your rights to attend meetings

The access to information rules for meetings of Exeter City Council and its Committees are set out under Sections 100A-H and Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended and by the regulations under section 22 of the Local Government Act 2000 in relation to the Executive.

Exeter City Council supports the principles of transparency and openness in relation to its decision-making and will try to make as much information as possible available to the public.

For further information, please see the Access to Information Procedure Rules under Part 3 of the [Constitution](#) (Section 3D).

This page is intentionally left blank



**Exeter City Council**

## How a member of the public can ask a question at a Council or Committee meeting

Members of the public may ask questions at ordinary meetings of the Council, the Executive and Scrutiny Committees.

A question may only be asked if notice has been given by submitting no later than 10am, three working days before the day of the meeting.

Please visit the [Speaking at a committee](#) page for further information and a link to the online form to request to speak.

### After the meeting

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires us to publicly publish Council meeting agendas and minutes and accompanying documentation in which names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings will be recorded. We have a duty to look after the information we hold about you.

Council meetings may also be broadcast through social media and the press and other members of the public may be present at the meetings. Names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings are recorded in minutes. For more details on how we use your information please visit [the Democratic Services Privacy Notice](#) on the website.

This page is intentionally left blank



**Exeter City Council**

## Your chance to speak at the Planning Committee

The Planning Committee considers significant or major planning applications which relate to the City. The majority of planning applications are determined by the Council's planning officers under delegated powers.

The City Council wants to make sure the decision-making process is an open one and allows people who have an interest in an application to express their view on significant or major applications. This opportunity is aimed primarily at individuals who have a direct interest in the application. Consequently, professional representation is strongly discouraged.

As part of the usual planning application process, all applications are publicised and people already have the right to send in written comments about an application.

These comments are summarised and reported to the Committee. The right to speak at the meeting is designed to complement the existing process, not replace it.

### How can I register to speak?

Anyone wishing to speak for or against an application must submit the request to speak by 10am on the Thursday before the meeting (2 working days). Planning Committee is usually held on a Monday at 5.30pm at the Civic Centre.

If the meeting is one not being held on a Monday, then requests to speak must be received by 10am two working days before the committee.

Further information and a link to the online form to request to speak can be found on the [Speaking at planning committee meetings](#) page on the website.

### Need more information?

If you have any questions about speaking at a Planning Committee, or you wish to know the dates, times and venue of meetings, please contact Democratic Services on 01392 265425 or see [Planning Committee](#) on our website.

Speaking at Planning Committee is available to anyone but limited to **one speaker for** and **one against** the application. Where there is more than one objector or more than one supporter for an application, requests to speak will be dealt with on a first come first served basis. Speaking time is a maximum of five minutes per speaker.

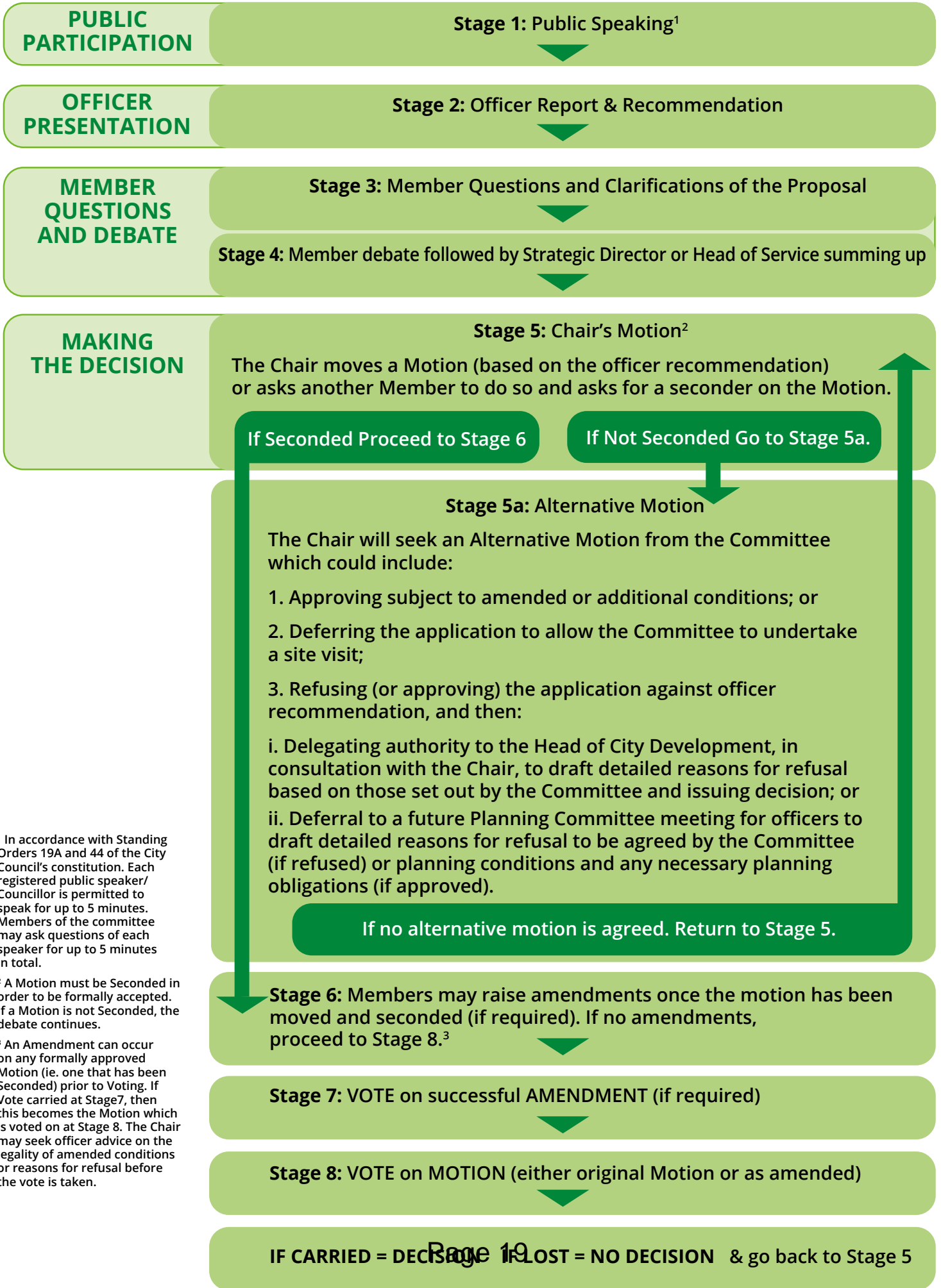
If you have any questions about any particular item on a Planning Committee agenda, you should speak to the Planning Officer dealing with the matter. Their name, telephone number and email address are available on the neighbour notification letter.

### After the meeting

The Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 requires us to publically publish Council meeting agendas and minutes and accompanying documentation in which names of

Public Speakers at Committee meetings will be recorded. We have a duty to look after the information we hold about you. Council meetings may also be broadcast live through social media and the press and other members of the public may be present at the meetings. Names of Public Speakers at Committee meetings are recorded in minutes.

For more details on how we use your information please visit [the Democratic Services Privacy Notice](#) on the website.



<sup>1</sup> In accordance with Standing Orders 19A and 44 of the City Council's constitution. Each registered public speaker/ Councillor is permitted to speak for up to 5 minutes. Members of the committee may ask questions of each speaker for up to 5 minutes in total.

<sup>2</sup> A Motion must be Seconded in order to be formally accepted. If a Motion is not Seconded, the debate continues.

<sup>3</sup> An Amendment can occur on any formally approved Motion (ie. one that has been Seconded) prior to Voting. If Vote carried at Stage 7, then this becomes the Motion which is voted on at Stage 8. The Chair may seek officer advice on the legality of amended conditions or reasons for refusal before the vote is taken.

This page is intentionally left blank